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# COURSE CLUSTERS

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The Course Cluster Program (<https://college.uchicago.edu/academics/college-course-clusters/>) is designed to continue the thematic focus and multidisciplinary perspective of the general education curriculum; to expose students to ideas from the vantage point of different disciplines across the humanities and the social, physical, and biological sciences; to stimulate and cultivate the student's intellectual curiosity and sense of academic adventure; and to help students structure their electives without imposing programmatic strictures and limiting the freedom of intellectual exploration.

Course clusters consist of three or more courses on a common topic or issue that are offered over a span of two to three years. Course clusters can be made up of existing courses or encourage the creation of new courses. Courses within a cluster can have different formats. They can be smaller seminars or larger lecture courses. The only prerequisite is that they have no prerequisites and not be designed primarily for minors/majors (even though they can count towards major requirements).

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**Please review the** College Course Clusters page (<https://college.uchicago.edu/academics/college-course-clusters/>) **for updated information regarding the Course Cluster Initiative, including courses belonging to each cluster.**

The following are examples of course clusters currently offered:

## CLIMATE CHANGE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

The planetary scale of anthropogenic climate change challenges us to reassess many central questions in the humanities and social sciences from justice and power to truth and art. This course cluster encourages students to explore the problem of climate change from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Courses in history, political science, classics, English, philosophy, and other disciplines from the social sciences and the humanities complement courses in the physical and biological sciences. In addition to learning about the science of climate change in the latter, the former will ask a host of questions: What were the historical roots of fossil fuel use? What can the human past teach us about our ability to cope with climate change? How will we ensure justice and human rights in the face of a threat that affects poor people and future generations disproportionately? In what ways might literature and art help understand and communicate climate change, and shape our sense of agency and hope in facing an uncertain future?

## ECONOMIC HISTORY, FROM SUMER TO THE GLOBAL WORLD

The course cluster "Economic History, from Sumer to the Global World" will propose every year up to three courses in economic history. We wish to cover a broad time span and a wide range of cultures. The courses will put a special emphasis on the methodology of economic history. The students will thus also be able to acquire a deep knowledge of the questions that are currently debated in this field.

## HISTORY OF THE LAW

The development of law and legal systems is one of the defining hallmarks of societies from antiquity to the present. Abundant written evidence survives from the societies of the ancient Mediterranean, the Near East, South Asia, and East Asia. This cluster of courses will include deep dives into individual legal systems known from ancient societies in Greece, Rome, Babylonia, Assyria, Israel, Egypt, China, and India, as well as comparative investigations informed by historical and anthropological literatures.

## INEQUALITY

The problem of inequality has been an abiding concern in the social sciences and humanities. In recent years it has attracted heightened attention and inspired scholarly innovation, fostering real ferment among those seeking to understand the mainsprings of the modern world. To understand such an abiding aspect of social and cultural organization requires a broad set of analytical resources and intellectual perspectives. Drawing on a range of methodologies, students will trace and examine the sources and challenges of inequality and mobility in many of their dimensions, selecting from courses in economics, history, political science, gender and sexuality studies, public policy, and other disciplines across the divisions. The broad, considered lens offered by this approach will allow students in the cluster to understand more fully the dynamics and consequences of inequality in modern culture and society, and its roots in persistent patterns of distribution of wealth, income, education, and social and other kinds of capital.

## URBAN DESIGN

Urban design concerns the proactive effort to create human settlements of a particular character and quality. The study of urban design is an opportunity to evaluate the difference between ideal and actuality, gaining an understanding of what urban designers are trying to do and why and evaluating the reasons behind apparent successes and failures. Students will explore the history, theory, and practice of urban design from multiple perspectives, from historical surveys to more contemporary investigations of urban interventions and their effect on social change, in courses offered through art history, geographical studies, history, anthropology, sociology, comparative human development, and other disciplines from the social sciences and humanities.

Whether urban design is capable of balancing social equity, aesthetic achievement, economic growth, and environmental stewardship is of key interest within the field, practice, and study of urban design. How do we leverage meaningful public engagement in the urban design process? How do we balance individual expression and a sense of the collective? Students will engage with these fundamental problems in diverse contexts across the cluster.

